

The Wintonbury Drummer



Newsletter of the Wintonbury Historical Society

Bloomfield, Connecticut

November, 2014

AUER FARM IS NOVEMBER PRESENTATION

The town of Bloomfield was only about 75 years old when a man named Perkins farmed about 250 acres on the hillside south of Simsbury Road opposite the Southwest District School, just west of Burr Road. Before the end of World War I that property had been transformed into what a Hartford newspaper called a "Model Dairy Plant, a Showplace of Dairy Farms in the State, populated with cows that produced about 700 quarts of milk each day." Although the number of animals has decreased significantly, it is still a dairy farm today.

Among the succession of owners since that time was the Auerbach family, heirs of whom gave the remaining seventy-five acres to the Connecticut 4H development fund in May 1977. Today generations of children know the property as the 4H Auer Farm, a magnificent working farm and educational center. David Title, former Superintendent of Bloomfield Schools, once described the farm as one where "kids can get their learning hands-on with animals, dirt, the outdoors, and so forth."

Wintonbury Historical Society Historian Frederick A. Hesketh will be at Prosser Library on November 12 to discuss the history of the property, its owners, and the programs carried out there to introduce generations of Bloomfield and other Hartford area children to the farm life that once existed in Bloomfield in times past.

NOVEMBER PROGRAM

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 6:30 PM (NOTE TIME!)

PROSSER PUBLIC LIBRARY, 1 TUNXIS AVENUE

No admission charge; register at 860-243-9721

Additional parking at Riley Lumber



Fred Hesketh

Photo by David Royce

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LASALETTE DEMOLITION COMPLETED

Our last issue (September 2014) featured the building once occupied by the LaSalette Novitiate on Mountain Avenue, next to the Filley House. (See "LaSalette Building Demolition Imminent," pp. 4-5.) We can report that the demolition was completed in September, and nothing remains except a nearby garage, which the Duncaster Community will use for its vehicles. In addition to the stained-glass windows which were saved and stored at the Filley House, the Historical Society also has the building's cornerstone.

IN MEMORIAM

We mourn the passing of life member **Steven E. Wilson**, who had been living in Niantic, and of Judge **Jerry Wagner**, past-president of the Society and longtime community activist.

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.

we  volunteers!

OUR BUSINESS MEMBERS

Bloomfield Garage,

689 Park Avenue

Sir Speedy Printing,

21 Old Windsor Road

Windsor Federal Savings,

54 Jerome Avenue

THANK YOU!

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NESMITH RECEIVES AWARD

The principal of Bloomfield's Metacomet School, Desi Nesmith, is the only educator in Connecticut to be named a 2014 Milliken Family Foundation award-winner. The Milliken award, which includes an unrestricted \$25,000 grant, is one of the most prestigious education awards in the nation. Metacomet School is a close neighbor of the Historical Society.

According to the *Hartford Courant*, state education Commissioner Stefan Pryor (who was present on October 9 when the award was announced to the surprised principal) credited Nesmith as the reason the third-grade achievement gap has been eliminated at Metacomet and the reason why its third-grade reading, writing and math scores exceed the state average by 8.1 percent.

Nesmith, 35, as a child in first and second grades, walked across the street from his home to attend Metacomet. His father was a Hartford teacher, and Nesmith knew from an early age that he wanted to follow his father's example.

The Wintonbury Historical Society has worked with Metacomet third-graders at the Old Farm School and in their own building. We know firsthand what wonderful children they are and how talented and dedicated their teachers are.



Nesmith registers surprise, Supt. James Thompson delight, as the award is announced at Metacomet. Photo courtesy of the Milliken Family Foundation.

GENEALOGY TOOL NOW AVAILABLE FREE AT BLOOMFIELD LIBRARIES

Research your family tree at the Bloomfield Public Libraries! Ancestry® Library Edition is a genealogy resource that delivers billions of records in census data, vital records, immigration and military records, court and legal documents, photos, and more. Online access to this resource is available onsite at the Bloomfield Public Libraries only.

Prosser Public Library
1 Tunxis Avenue
860-243-9721

P. Faith McMahon Wintonbury Library
1015 Blue Hills Avenue
860-242-0041

PUBLICATIONS FOR SALE: TIME TO PLAN FOR HOLIDAY SHOPPING

The following books are available from the Society. Please include \$4 for postage and send your order to WHS, PO Box 7454, Bloomfield 06002, or email wintonbursociety@att.net, or stop by the History Center Sunday or Monday afternoons to purchase a copy.

The Browns of Wintonbury, \$10

Over Tunxis Trails, \$15

From Wintonbury to Bloomfield, \$10

Bloomfield and the Civil War, \$12

History of the Bloomfield Catholic Church, \$15

The Good Old Days, \$4

Images of America: Bloomfield, \$20

What's Cooking in Bloomfield, \$4



GOODBYE, MILLER HOUSE

The impending demolition of the William F. Miller house at the corner of Mountain Avenue and Maple Avenue has attracted widespread attention recently. Unfortunately, it is too late. The house sat for years with a large hole in the roof. Michael Kosilla, town zoning enforcement officer, said that under a new property blight ordinance the town was finally able to take the owner to Connecticut Housing Court and force him to take action.

Libbie Merrow, writing in *The Journal* of October 17-31, 2014, explains that William Fowler Miller was the third pastor of First Congregational Church. The first, Hezekiah Bissell, had served forty-five years until his death in 1783. The second, Solomon Walcott, was caught up in the Half-Way Covenant controversy and left in 1790. William Miller was installed as pastor in 1791 and restored harmony and tranquility to the divided church, serving as pastor until his death in 1818. He married in 1792, bought the then thirty-year-old house on Mountain Avenue, and filled it with eight children.

Rick Otis grew up in the Miller House in the 1960s, son of Dr. and Mrs. Otis. In a September email to the Bloomfield Town Council, Rick says that the house is one of, if not the only, center-hall, double-chimney full colonial houses in Bloomfield and contains such things as wide plank floors and a large cooking fireplace with beehive baking oven. He states that there is a wood panel above the cooking fireplace measuring four by ten feet and made from a single piece of wood. The house was built using the sturdy post-and-beam construction, which may explain why it has stood for so long in such a state of neglect. It contains many valuable parts, such as the brick of the massive fireplaces, iron hardware on the doors, old paneling and wide plank flooring.

Fred Hesketh, writing in the *Bloomfield Messenger* for October 10, 2014, explains how, following action by the state's Housing Court, when the owner was ordered to repair or demolish the house, the community responded. Dale Bertholdi of the Wintonbury Land Trust contacted the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation. Under its Circuit Rider Program, the



Miller House front, in the good old days.



Side and lawn



Miller House side and sun porch

Photos from days past courtesy of Rick Otis

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Trust sent Greg Farmer to evaluate the house. This led to a visit by a structural engineer on October 1. He looked at the house and decided it was too dangerous to enter the interior, as the outer walls could easily collapse. The recommendation, then, was to demolish the house. The owner is responsible for all costs, and demolition is expected in early November.

For those who want to pursue more information about William Miller, consult the Society's publication *Hezekiah's Children*, written by Pastor Roscoe Metzger and available at the Bloomfield History Center. Rick Otis has also supplied several Internet sources. If you access this newsletter at the WHS website, you can copy a long address and paste it into the address bar of your browser. The following sources have been tried and found to be okay.

- Miller's family history: <http://www.wikitree.com/genealogy/Miller-Family-Tree-1092>
- Miller's grave site in Old Wintonbury Cemetery: <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GSI=mill&GSiman=1&GScid=2130277&GRid=83949917&>
- Biography and mention of his sermons: http://books.google.com/books?id=tqxNAAAAMAAJ&pg=PA495&lpg=PA495&dq=william+fowler+miller+yale+graduate&source=bl&ots=9hkKHkr42R&sig=CMqBkUxr26yiDcEVIg0-V6rG6ns&hl=en&sa=X&ei=RigXVL_EJ4G2yATf6YDoBA&ved=0CCQQ6AEwAg#v=onepage&q=william%20fowler%20miller%20yale%20graduate&f=false
- List of couples he married: http://dunhamwilcox.net/ct/windsor_bloomfld_hartford_marr.htm

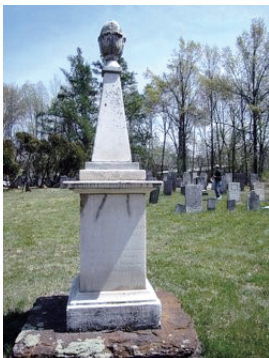
All photos and first floor plan
courtesy of Rick Otis



William Fowler Miller House



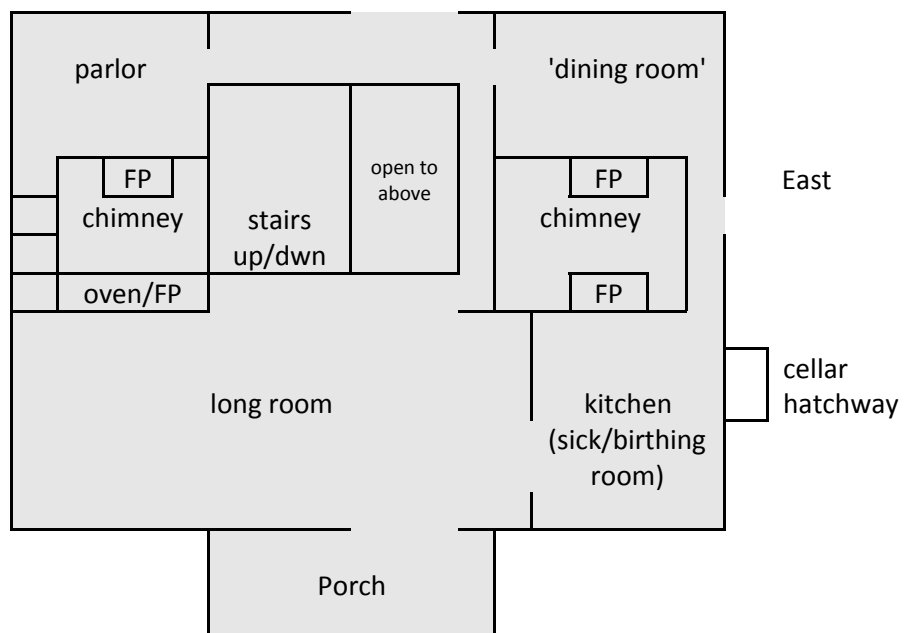
Miller House, west side

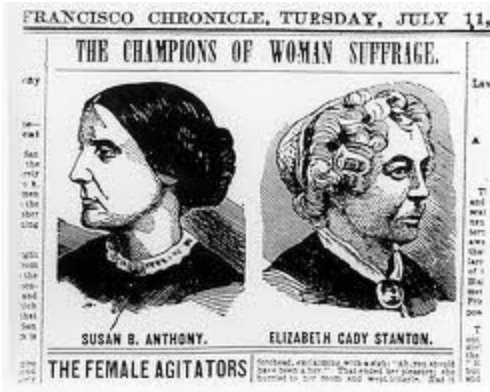


Miller monument in Old Wintonbury
Cemetery, Bloomfield

1st floor

Front (north, Mountain Avenue side)





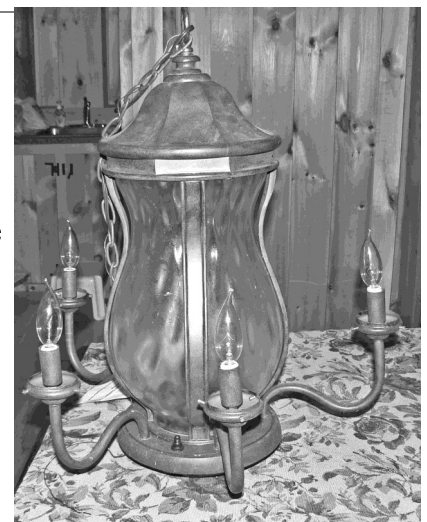
CURATOR'S CORNER by Fannie Gabriel

The Nineteenth Amendment, which prohibited state or federal sex-based restrictions on voting, was ratified on August 18, 1920, some 94 years ago. Historical Society files show that in Bloomfield just one month later, on September 18, 1920, seventy-nine women registered to vote. Their names were:

Miss Jane Case	Mrs. Helen W. Woodford	Mrs. Cora B. Filley	Mrs. Mabelle E. Granger
Mrs. Emma A. Clark	Miss Ruth W. Woodford	Mrs. Mary E. Mack	Mrs. Eugenia M. Barnard
Miss Marion M. Griffin	Mrs. Faith T. Stuhlman	Mrs. Elizabeth A. Wessing	Miss Helen M. Lagan
Mrs. Winnifred K. Everitt	Mrs. Edith M. Capen	Mrs. Mary A. Mexcur	Miss Martha L. Lagan
Mrs. Julia A. Mack	Miss Ora M. Gaylord	Mrs. Addie M. Miller	Mrs. Goldey Rosenbun
Mrs. Jane B. Medbery	Mrs. Josephine C. Hubbard	Miss Harriet E. Burnham	Mrs. Mary T. Lynch
Mrs. Harriet B. Dean	Mrs. Adelle C. Hubbard	Mrs. Carrie T. Vincent	Mrs. Bessie L. Mansur
Mrs. Etta J. Fagan	Mrs. Esther S. V. Snell	Mrs. Sarah B. Eddy	Mrs. Florence E. Barnard
Mrs. Ethel J. Bidwell	Mrs. Lottie Bowdoin	Mrs. Mabel M. Snyder	Mrs. Bessie P. Wade
Miss Emily J. Wilcox	Miss Grace L. Hayes	Miss M. Isabel Eddy	Miss Edna A. Woodford
Mrs. Mary E. Kibbe	Mrs. Maud B. Marks	Mrs. Gertrude M. Barnard	Mrs. Sarah A. Joyce
Miss Ruth C. Kibbe	Miss Calla R. White	Miss Nellie C. Newberry	Mrs. Kathryn H. Darling
Mrs. Nellie M. Wilcox	Mrs. Olive T. Hall	Mrs. May A. Pinney	Mrs. Fannie M. Weiant
Miss Ethelwyn L. Bidwell	Mrs. Sarah M. Campbell	Miss Helen M. O'Connor	Miss Margaret I. McLaughlin
Mrs. Elizabeth S. Hadley	Mrs. Harriet D. Barnard	Miss Annie M. Christensen	Mrs. Helen L. McCormick
Mrs. Anna M. Swem	Mrs. Gertrude P. Dow	Mrs. Mary E. Mitchelsen	Mrs. Susan M. Olcott
Mrs. Minnie B. Hurd	Mrs. Pearl F. Bidwell	Mrs. Eliza C. Willoughby	Mrs. Mary A. Cahill
Mrs. Cora L. Beman	Mrs. Mildred W. Caswell	Mrs. Florence B. Case	Mrs. Helen A. Gildner
Mrs. Lillian C. Utley	Mrs. Helen S. Ladd	Miss Jennie L. Shepherd	Mrs. Margaret A. McLaughlin
Mrs. Bertha S. Griffin	Mrs. Alice B. Capen	Mrs. Kathryn A. Mexcur	

CHANDELIER FOR SALE

When the Wintonbury Historical Society opened its new History Center in 2010, a chandelier hung from the high ceiling. It was subsequently replaced by a fan which would help circulate the air. The Society would like to sell the chandelier. It is a Savoy House Outdoor Five-Light Chandelier, Monticello Collection. Thirty inches high and 28 inches wide, it cost about \$500 new. It features clear watered glass and has five 60 watt candelabra sockets and one 100 watt medium socket. Please send your offer to wintonbursociety@att.net or call Fannie Gabriel for more information (860-242-1016),



BOARD OF DIRECTORS HIGHLIGHTS

The Board met on Wednesday, October 15, with eleven persons present. The president reported on the LaSalette windows and cornerstone and the recent developments on the Miller House. He said work is due to start soon on stabilizing the outbuildings at the Filley House. The president's request that Bloomfield Access Television record the WHS November 12 program was not successful, although they will air the program if we record it and give it to them. Finally, Bloomfield Pride Week is being planned for June 8-13, 2015, and events may include History Days.

The treasurer's report showed income for the fiscal year as of September 30 of \$574 and expenses of \$1,895. Of the expenses, \$561 was covered by our CT Humanities grant. Utilities cost \$702 so far, and printing and postage amounted to \$244. Our website hosting has cost \$140 so far, but we are hoping to substantially reduce this monthly expense. The Board spent quite a lot of time talking about how to increase our income.

The Collections Committee showed off a portrait of Oliver Filley that was donated to us by the Filley family. It is part of the new exhibit mentioned below.

Among other committees, progress is being made on the Society's website and the end of that process is in sight. Also, there was discussion of the flower gardens in front of the Old Farm School, with some people feeling they should be eliminated and others wanting to see garden plants of the early 1800s. We wondered if local garden clubs could be of assistance.

The president described some of the technical challenges and uncertainties regarding sending our newsletter by email. After much discussion, the Board voted to rescind its decision of September to use email and to continue to pay for printing and surface mail.

Two other pieces of old business came up. First was whether to discontinue our insurance. No action was taken, and the treasurer will do more study on our lease terms and our liabilities. Second, the Board reviewed the Interpretative Goals for 2014-2015 and voted to adopt them.

A final item was consideration of selling the chandelier which used to hang in the History Center. We will advertise it in our newsletter and we will also ask Nadeau's Auction Gallery in Windsor how much they can offer for it.

FILLEY EXHIBIT OPENS

The Society has recently acquired a portrait of Captain Oliver Filley, the gift of his great-great-great-grandson Dwight Wilbur Filley. The portrait is a special feature of the new Filley Exhibit, which opened on Sunday, October 12, and will be on display throughout the fall on Sunday and Monday afternoons. Also to be seen is the actual wedding dress worn by Julia Ann Newberry when she married the Captain's son Jay in 1834.

Oliver Filley, patriarch of the family and successful farmer, politician and tinware manufacturer, left his mark on Bloomfield in the form of a street, a park, and a house all named for him.



Whoops! This misspelled sign, erected during the summer, was quickly removed. (R. Pierce photo)

WHAT DO HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEMBERS DO?

Program planning

Cleaning

Cataloguing

Researching

Photographing

Writing

Painting

Gardening

Holiday decoration

Hospitality

Teaching

Drawing/lettering

Editing/layout

Publicity

Data entry

Fund raising

Genealogy

Selling

Accounting

Member contact

Telephoning

Transportation

Oral histories

Archiving

Hosting at Old Farm School and

History Center

Updating web site

Face Book

Emailing

Using Microsoft Word

Using MS Excel

Using MS Publisher

Using MS Access

Serving as a Director

Wintonbury Historical Society Calendar of Events for 2015

Membership meetings and public programs (all Wednesdays, 7:00 PM, except as noted):

February 4 (6:30 at Prosser)

April 8

June 3

September 9

November 4

Tag Sale: Saturday, April 25 with a rain date of Saturday, May 2

Board of Directors meetings (all Wednesdays, 7:00):

January 14

March 18

May 13

August 19

October 14

Newsletter Changes Cancelled

The Board of Directors has cancelled its plan to save money by emailing this newsletter. Instead, other ways will be sought for covering the cost.



VIDEO COMPLETE

Ralph Schmoll has just announced that he has completed his video on the Gillette House. More in the next issue.

The Wintonbury Drummer solicits articles, personal reminiscences, book reviews, photographs, etc. from its readers. Materials for publication in the February issue should be received by January 7, 2015. (Or better yet—do it now!) Send directly to the President at 14 Julie Lane in Bloomfield or email in MSWord format to: Wintonbursociety@att.net.